



**CITY OF ABSECON**  
**Municipal Complex**  
**500 Mill Road**  
**Absecon, New Jersey 08201**

**Carie A. Crone, RMC**  
**Municipal Clerk**

**Phone (609) 641-0663x101**  
**Fax (609) 645-5098**

**CITY COUNCIL**

**FEBRUARY 13, 2020**

**BUDGET MEETING - 5:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Keith Bennett at 5:00 pm.

**FLAG SALUTE**

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Butch Burroughs, Sandy Cain, Caleb Cavileer, Steve Light, Frank Phillips, Keith Bennett

**ABSENT:** Betty Howell

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mayor Horton, Jessica Thompson, Julianne Cannuscio, Ed Dennis

**STATEMENT OF THE SUNSHINE LAW**

**NOTIFICATION THAT THIS MEETING IS ELECTRONICALLY RECORDED**

**POLICE DEPT.**

**Lt. Ray Adams** – the one car we purchased in 2019 just arrived and they are looking to get three cars this year. The hybrid Explorer costs \$33,928 the other one is \$2,445 per vehicle less. We are taking that into consideration. The upgrade costs for each vehicle is about \$12,000, making the vehicle \$53,530. Have 9 vehicles now and one is in bad shape. If we get three new ones, we would then have 11 Explorers. There would be two caprices left and they have their own problems. Keith asked for an updated list of all the cars showing the years, mileage, type etc. and asked how the E ticket is working out.

**J.R.** – it saves a lot of time at each stop and explained how it works.

**Keith** - there's been a reduction in municipal court revenue coming in, which is pretty significant. Why is that? Maybe you can find out by the next budget meeting.

**J.R.** – there were less tickets written in 2019.

**Steve** – getting another tag reader might help revenues

## **AMBULANCE**

**Chief Brunner** – we are looking for the same support we got last year to be put towards our insurance again, which was \$50,000 paid in installments. We don't have set monthly income expectations. Revenues were up this year, but we can't say it will for this year. Boardwalk Hall contract was extended for 6 months until the end of March and the Hard Rock has them on a month to month. Our 2012 Dodge they purchased started to have computer glitches and we had to replace the motherboard twice and touch panel twice. The manufacturer is using new touch panels now and in order to upgrade it costs about \$12,000. We paid \$25,000 for it and we are waiting for hard costs to decide what to do. Calls for service for up slightly last year, maybe around 200.

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**Chief Talley** – they are asking for \$72,000. There were repairs done this year and equipment maintenance has gone up each year. It includes mandated testing as well. We had to switch over to tool fuel too. Membership allotment they want to add another \$1,000 since their numbers have gone up; we've had about 8 new members in two years. Some come, so go. He's not sure about the new fire house and if the following items were budgeted for: window treatments; a training pad of 20 x 20 and a boiler for the ice melt system. With the electrical communications line they want to replace 6 pagers this year. We can repair or replace one VHF radio. The siren needs to be moved off the old firehouse. With the Opticom system an infrared signal gets sent out and you can change the traffic lights. Education and Training is always needed and important. Turnout gear will cost over \$4,000 for 4 sets we need; anything older than 2007 is outdated. Computer equipment – the software needs to be upgraded as well as new printers and computers. Air packs cost \$1,200 each and we need 5 new ones. They have a 15 year life span. We got turned down for a grant this year. We're applying for a grant for a washer and dryer at the cost of \$23,000 and we probably won't know for several months. Each year a new truck is discussed and they should be replaced every 20 years. Our equipment is old and he listed the trucks. He doesn't want to do what Somers Point had to do and buy 3 in one year. We also need a truck that can reach taller buildings, so a ladder truck should be the first purchase and they are about \$975,000.00. There is a way to get one and not have to pay for it for a year or so.

## **CAPITAL PROJECTS**

**Eddie Dennis** – went through the list of projects that have been discussed over the years and the numbers you see are relevant and some costs have budgeted money that are being reallocated.

**2020 Road program** – we were going to trim it down this year due to the new firehouse. We were hoping to get a full grant for Bayview Drive, but we only received \$305,000, so there is a deficit of \$270,000 for the city to cover if they move forward. He suggests that we don't do anything to set us back again with the State. He feels we should just do this one road in 2020.

**2021 Road program** – this would be for next year's design budget expenses. You don't need to decide what roads would be done

**City Hall retaining wall** – this was budgeted last year and we had to bump it up, so this is a buffer to get it done. It's been on the list for some time.

**New Firehouse** – there was a large amount of work that we said we'd fund in 2020 and this is that.

**Pitney Road Sidewalk Improvements** – this was largely budgeted last year, but after meetings we added onto the project. It's been gone over with the County and the project can go out to bid.

**Absecon Creek Dredging** – we talked about this over the year and have had meetings with the DEP and he recommends this first step of doing a bathymetric survey of the part that is not in the State's jurisdiction. It will let you know where the mud line is and how deep the water is and explained how it is done. If we have some leg work done, it will put us in a better position with the State.

**Jessica** - there are some funds we had from last year and we can use some of them towards these projects that Ed mentioned, so not to have a large increase in the budget. The generator project is complete and there are some funds left that can be reallocated. It appears that we are not going to be in a position to do the projects we had discussed. We can reallocate those funds as well. We should leave \$50,000 for the upgrades of the park that are needed. Lloyd actually started some of the items. We need to complete the road program and the firehouse, so we would need to do an ordinance for \$367,000 to do this and we only need to raise 5% of it in our budget, which would be \$18,350.

Jessica received a request from Jenn Harvey for 25 portable radios due to the age and software that supports them. They are over 10 years old and at the end of their life.

We do have funds in a general capital account and last year we actually got a substantial amount of premium, so we have enough in it to cover the police cars and the radios. It would wipe it out and we wouldn't need to do a bond ordinance. She could do a capital ordinance to use these funds if everyone consents. Sandy asked if there was enough to get another tag reader and Jessica will check into it.

As to the Fire Department requests, she is pretty sure the truck is off the table. They have a regular budget and have to follow the purchase order procedure with getting prices as with any other expenditures of the city. There is a lot more funding from the City than what they came to you with.

**Steve** – he has donated to them over the years and there is nothing stating what they bring in each year. They do deserve it, but that's more money than what the ambulance has coming in.

Some of the technology stuff is going to be upgraded with the new building, so they could use that \$5,000 for the air tanks.

**Ed** – the project was bid for a placeholder washer and dryer, knowing that they were working on a more robust system. We will customize the hookups for what is purchased.

**Jessica** – they are hoping for a grant for the washer and dryer, but she needs to know what Council wants to do if they don't receive the grant

**Sandy** – could we have that money set aside in another account and if they don't get the grant, we'd have the money?

**Jessica** – said she could do that and if it doesn't get used, it would go back to the fund balance. She said she would explain later on in the budget where it would go.

They went over the proposal that would include a 2 cent increase in taxes. We have gone for 6 years with having a flat budget or a reduction. We have continued to grow our police department and dispatch center and fire department expenses and there is a lot of money we've been spending

in Public Safety and not increasing the budget. We can't keep doing that forever. We should have had a modest increase over the years, but it's time now. We are in a strong financial position now. The value of the city has gone down due to the economy. Now we have to cover the budget with a small tax increase. She wanted it known, that this has nothing to do with the firehouse, but with the public safety increases we have had and maintaining the services provided to the residents. We would be using a little bit more of the fund balance that we've had to do in previous years. We could leave \$1.1 million in it. We've had an increase in the sewer fund and we have no debt for it, so we have room to allocate some of the extra expenses to it.

The revenue was then discussed. Court revenue has gone down and the interest on taxes went down, but that means they are paying them. Construction fees were high with the new construction, but now that has dropped off; the community champions program that registers vacant homes is down, but that means more people are in their homes too. The tax levy is about 1 cent for \$70,000.

## **PROPOSED BUDGET**

Most of the departments have come in the same or even less and most of the salaries are the same. She does have \$15,000 in tech because we need to upgrade the server and some computers. She is bringing the legal and engineering down to \$100,000. You can't go too low because you don't know what might come up. Police salaries are up \$115,000 due to contractual issues. Communications goes along with the police department and we need to keep that department running. The ambulance squad is the same. The fire department's requests are up to council, but she left it the same for now. She then went through some other line items and explained those expenses. Capital expenditures were discussed next. We do need to keep money in the uncollected tax account because even if we don't receive payments, the city has to pay the county and school taxes.

## **PUBLIC PORTION**

Motion to open to the public – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

All were in favor.

Motion to close public – Councilman Phillips – second – Councilman Burroughs

All were in favor.

## **CLOSED SESSION - #38-2020 – Personnel matters**

Keith – read the resolution

Motion to enter closed session – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

All were in favor.

**Keith** – resolutions will be prepared for next meeting dealing with the personnel matters discussed

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn – Councilman Cavileer – second – Councilwoman Cain

All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Carrie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 3-5-2020